



SEVENTH SUPPLEMENT

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FRIDAY, 2 MAY, 1919.

Admiralty, 2nd May, 1919.

LETTER FROM VICE-ADMIRAL
S. H. CARDEN, MARCH 17, 1915.

H.M.S. "Queen Elizabeth,"

SIR,— *March 17, 1915.*

I have the honour to submit, for the consideration of their Lordships, the narrative of events during the operations of the Allied British and French Squadrons against the defences of the Dardanelles, from the 19th February to 16th March, 1915.

There was a marked difference in the tactics of the enemy manning the forts at the entrance when attacked on this occasion to that which they followed on the 3rd November, 1914; on that day when a short bombardment was carried out by "Indefatigable," "Indomitable," "Suffren," and "Verite," by a run past in close order, range 13,000 yards, they replied to our fire almost at once, and maintained from forts Nos. 1, 3, 4 and 6, till our squadron completed their run. The only projectiles, however, which fell close were those from the 9 1/2 inch guns in forts Nos. 1 and 4.

Good practice was made by the Allied Squadron on forts Nos. 3 and 6, in the former of which there was a large magazine explosion. Information was received later that the casualties to personnel were high amongst the enemy, some accounts putting it at 600.

That it was considerable is, I think, shown by the fact that on the 19th February, when the present operations began, and a deliberate bombardment by our ships took place, no Turkish fort attempted to reply until late in the afternoon, when the old battleships were sent close in. They apparently kept their men in shelters until the desired moment.

Bad weather prevented a renewal until the 26th February, and then there was this difference. Fort No. 1 opened fire on "Agamemnon" at 10,000 yards as soon as that ship was in position, and hit her several times. This fort maintained its fire with great perseverance against "Queen Elizabeth," "Agamemnon," and "Gaulois," until the former ship by hitting with two consecutive 15-inch projectiles dismounted one gun and put the other out of action, and effectually silenced the fort; the surviving personnel quickly made their way down to the neighbouring village.

On the same day the accurate fire of "Irresistible" on fort No. 4 prevented its two 9.4-inch guns taking any part in the proceedings. When the ships closed in forts No. 3 and 6 fired a few ineffective rounds.

Although a heavy and prolonged fire at short range was poured into these forts, 70 per cent. of the heavy guns were found to be in a serviceable condition when the demolition parties landed.

The destruction of the guns in fort No. 3 by "Irresistible," and in Nos. 4 and 6 by "Vengeance," was most smartly and effectively carried out on the 26th February and the 1st March by demolition parties from those ships, which were ably supported by their detachments of Royal Marines.

In this service the following officers are specially and strongly recommended:—

Major G. M. Heriot, D.S.O., R.M.L.I., "Vengeance."

Lieutenant-Commander (T.) E. G. Robinson, "Vengeance."

Lieutenant (T.) F. H. Sandford, "Irresistible."

The two latter officers are further very strongly recommended for their conduct in the sweeping operations.

I was present in "Inflexible" close off Kum Kale on the 4th March, and witnessed the landing operations which were under the immediate direction of Rear-Admiral de Robeck and Brigadier-General Trotman, both of whom were on board "Irresistible" in the entrance of the Straits. I consider the operations were correctly conducted, and that everything possible under the circumstances was done.

The skilful manner in which "Wolverine" (Commander O. J. Prentis) and "Scorpion" (Lieutenant-Commander A. B. Cunningham), ran close inshore after dark, and sent whalers ashore to bring off the remaining officers and men is highly commended.

I desire specially to endorse recommendations made by the Rear-Admiral and Brigadier-General on the conduct of Lieutenant-Colonel G. E. Matthews, R.M.L.I., and also of Major A. E. Bewes, R.M.L.I.

Four Maxim guns, which had been left on Kum Kale Pier, were recovered by volunteers from "Agamemnon"—a smart and plucky piece of work.

The sweeping operations by night between the 12th and 15th March were conducted with great gallantry under heavy fire, and though not completely successful I consider the officers and men are deserving of great praise for their efforts.

It is regretted that a complete list of those who volunteered for this dangerous duty was lost in "Ocean," but a further list is being prepared and will be submitted as soon as possible.

The attempt made on the night 13th-14th March was most determined, and I desire to bring particularly to the notice of their Lordships the following names:—

Commander W. Mellor, in charge of minesweepers.

Lieutenant-Commander J. B. Waterlow, "Blenheim."

Lieutenant-Commander J. R. Middleton, "Albion."

Lieutenant-Commander E. G. Robinson, "Vengeance."

Lieutenant-Commander G. B. Palmes, "Egmont."

Lieutenant F. H. Sandford, "Irresistible."

Lieutenant B. T. Cox, R.N.R., "Prince George."

Acting-boatswain R. G. Young, "Cornwallis."

Midshipman J. C. W. Price, "Ocean."

Captain of trawler 318.

The six officers first-mentioned carried out these duties on several nights, and I desire to submit that they may be awarded the highest decoration suitable for their rank and seniority, and that Commander Mellor and Lieutenant-Commander Waterlow be promoted now.

In connection with the operation of the night 13th-14th March I desire also to bring to their Lordships' notice the name of Commander G. J. Todd, "Amethyst."

"Amethyst" was hit several times by large projectiles, and had her steering gear and engine-room telegraphs put out of action. Arrangements were quickly made to man the hand-steering wheel, and improvise engine-room communications. Both during and after the action Commander Todd was very ably assisted by Lieutenant James C. J. Soutter, Senior Lieutenant of "Amethyst," who was indefatigable in his efforts.

The services rendered by the Destroyer Flotilla during all this period have fully maintained the high traditions of that branch of the service, their boldness in action and untiring devotion to duty are worthy of the highest praise.

I beg to call special attention to the excellent work done by the French squadron on every occasion that they have been called upon, and also to the cordial good feeling which prevails in the Allied Fleet, due so much to the personality of that dashing and courteous officer, Contre-Admiral E. P. A. Guepratte.

I consider it a special duty to call attention to the excellent work done by Malta Dockyard, under Vice-Admiral A. H. Limpus, C.B., in supplying every need of the large force off the Dardanelles in addition to the main French Fleet. Commanding officers speak most highly of the great assistance rendered to them on all occasions at Malta, and the rapidity with which work is done, which shows that the principle that the dockyard exists for the benefit of ships is fully understood and acted upon.

The conduct and ability of the commanding officers has been of a high order.

The behaviour of officers and men on all occasions has been most admirable, and in every way as could be expected.

In closing the report on this stage of the operations I wish especially to bring to the notice of their Lordships the splendid work done by Rear-Admiral J. M. de Robeck, and the great assistance I have received from him, together with the valuable services of Commodore R. J. B. Keyes, C.B., M.V.O., Flag Commander Hon. A. R. M. Ramsay and Captain W. W. Godfrey, R.M.L.I., War Staff.

I have, &c.,

S. H. CARDEN, *Vice-Admiral*,

The Secretary the Admiralty.

Enclosure.

NARRATIVE OF EVENTS, DARDANELLES, FEBRUARY 19 TO MARCH 16, 1915.

The attack on the defences of the Dardanelles commenced on the 19th February, 1915.

Air reconnaissance on the 17th, 18th, and a.m. 19th confirmed information in our possession with regard to forts Nos. 1, 3, 4, and 6, except that an additional gun was shown in eastern bastion of fort No. 6.

Seaplanes also reported that some minor earthworks and trenches appeared to have been extensively prepared for the defence of possible landing places.

The following ships took part in the operations of the 19th February:—

SUFFREN (flag of Contre-Amiral Guépratte).

BOUVET

TRIUMPH.

CORNWALLIS.

INFLEXIBLE (flag of Vice-Admiral).

ALBION.

The "Gaulois" acted in support of "Suffren," while "Amethyst" supported "Albion."

Seven British mine sweepers were employed with "Albion."

The "Vengeance" (flag of Rear-Admiral de Robeck) was ordered to take station as convenient to observe the fire of her division.

4.30 p.m. "Queen Elizabeth" arrived with "Agamemnon," the latter taking part at the end of the day.

February 19.

9.51 a.m. "Cornwallis" fired first shot on fort No. 4.

10. "Triumph" opened fire on fort No. 1.

10.32. "Suffren" opened on fort No. 6.

10.38. Ships were ordered to anchor with a view to improving the practice.

11. The "Vengeance" and "Cornwallis" were ordered to exchange positions, "Cornwallis," owing to a defective capstan, being unable to anchor in deep water.

11.25. "Cornwallis" was ordered to spot for "Triumph" and for "Inflexible" if required.

11.45. "Inflexible" opened on fort No. 1, which was hard to distinguish, but practice appeared good.

0.14 p.m. "Vengeance" opened fire on fort No. 4—practice was very good—her third shot appeared to hit close to northern embrasure.

0.30. "Triumph" was ordered to cease fire, as she was unable to hit fort No. 1.

"Suffren," at this time, was making excellent practice against fort No. 6, firing by indirect laying, with "Bouvet" spotting.

0.52. "Triumph" was ordered to open fire with light guns on men showing signs of activity in a field-work 2 miles north of Cape Tekeh.

0.55. A seaplane was ordered up to spot for "Vengeance," but, owing to wireless troubles in seaplane, no results were obtained.

1. "Inflexible" opened fire on fort No. 3, making good practice.

1.56. It was now considered that the effect produced by the bombardment at long range was great enough to allow of ships approaching nearer to the forts, and signal was made accordingly.

2.12. "Suffren" and "Triumph" were ordered to commence their operations, the "Triumph" being ordered to engage the position of the new battery of Cape Tekeh only.

3.53. "Cornwallis" was ordered to close fort No. 1 "on present line of bearing," and open fire when certain of position.

4.10. There, being still no reply from the forts, "Vengeance" and "Cornwallis" were ordered to close and destroy forts.

Forts Nos. 3 and 6 were heavily bombarded by "Vengeance" and "Cornwallis," assisted by "Suffren." "Vengeance" engaged fort No. 4 with her secondary armament, while "Cornwallis" did the same to fort No. 1.

4.40. "Suffren" was directed to close the forts.

4.45. At the same time "Cease fire, examine forts," was signalled to "Vengeance."

Fort No. 1 opened fire on "Vengeance" and "Cornwallis," and shortly after fort No. 4 also opened fire.

"Vengeance" and "Cornwallis," assisted by "Bouvet," engaged and silenced fort No. 1. Fort No. 4 being left unfired at, both inshore ships were unaware that she had opened fire.

5. "Inflexible" opened fire on fort No. 4, with the immediate effect of causing her fire to suffer in accuracy.

5.08. "Gaulois" also opened fire on this fort.

"Agamemnon" was ordered to support "Vengeance."

5.09. The "General recall" was made—"Vengeance" requested permission to continue the action; this was not approved, as the light looking towards the land was becoming bad, while ships showed up well against western sky.

5.30. Cease firing was ordered and the squadron withdrew.

7. "Albion" reported "No mines or guns encountered—area has been swept."

The result of the day's action showed apparently, that the effect of long range bombardment by direct fire on modern earthwork forts is slight; forts Nos. 1 and 4 appeared to be hit, on many occasions, by 12-inch common shell well placed, but when the ships closed in all four guns in these forts opened fire.

From February 20 to 24.

From the 20th to 24th February, inclusive, the weather was too rough to continue operations, and no reconnaissance by seaplanes was possible.

February 25.

The weather being favourable, operations were resumed. No seaplanes took part—the sea being too rough for them to rise off the water.

The following ships took part:—

INFLEXIBLE, VENGEANCE, AGAMEMNON, QUEEN ELIZABETH, ALBION, CORNWALLIS, IRRESISTIBLE, TRIUMPH, SUFFREN, GAULOIS, BOUVET, CHARLEMAGNE, and DUBLIN, with eight destroyers and two submarines.

Ships were in position to commence the long-range bombardment by 10 a.m.—the destroyers forming a screen to seaward of the battleships.

10.7 a.m. "Agamemnon" reported range obtained of fort No. 1.

10.14. "Queen Elizabeth" opened fire on fort No. 3.

10.16. Fort No. 1 opened fire on "Agamemnon," range 10,000 yards.

10.18. "Gaulois" opened fire on fort No. 6.

10.22. "Agamemnon" opened fire on fort No. 1.

10.27. "Irresistible" opened fire on fort No. 4.

10.33. Fort No. 1 seemed to be getting the range of "Agamemnon," who was ordered to weigh and proceed further out—"Queen Elizabeth" being ordered to fire on fort No. 1.

Between 10.34 and 10.43. "Agamemnon" was hit seven times, but as the shells did not detonate it was not realised she had been struck; directly "Agamemnon" had good weigh on fort No. 1 lost the range.

10.44. Fort No. 1 opened an accurate fire on "Gaulois," who immediately replied to it from all her guns, this probably accounted for the fact that she was able to weigh and proceed further out without the fort scoring a single hit.

10.45. "Queen Elizabeth" opened fire on fort No. 1, and "Dublin" was observed firing at a gun near Yeni Shehr.

10.55. "Irresistible" reported she obtained range of fort No. 4, she was ordered to continue slow firing. She opened a very deliberate, accurate fire on the fort, which kept silent practically all day.

11.30. "Gaulois" was making excellent practice on fort 6.

11.47. Fort No. 1 was still firing at "Agamemnon" and "Gaulois," but shots were going short—its extreme range appeared to be about 11,000 yards.

Noon. "Queen Elizabeth," whose shooting had been extremely accurate, appeared to drop a shell right into fort No. 1, and at 0.02 p.m. she reported eastern gun dismounted.

0.15 p.m. "Irresistible" reported she thought her tenth round had damaged northern gun of fort No. 4.

"Vengeance" and "Cornwallis" were ordered to prepare for run 1, which was commenced at 12.45 p.m., with all covering ships firing deliberately on their allotted forts.

0.50. "Queen Elizabeth" reported she had hit the western gun of fort No. 1. "Agamemnon" also claimed to have hit this gun at 12.55 p.m. "Agamemnon" at this time was firing on fort No. 1. "Inflexible" engaging fort No. 3.

0.55. "Vengeance" and "Cornwallis" opened fire, concentrating chiefly on forts 1 and 4. Forts 3 and 6 both opened fire, but their practice was poor, and few rounds were fired. Forts 1 and 4 did not fire during the run.

By 1.22 "Vengeance" and "Cornwallis" had completed run 1, and all ships checked fire.

1.50. Rear-Admiral, "Vengeance," reported "No. 1 battery west gun pointing in the air, right gun not visible, battery not manned. No. 3 fired at 'Vengeance'—apparently using black powder—three guns are visible on south-west face. No. 4, both guns laid horizontal, battery not manned, one round was fired from western gun"

2.5. Contre-Amiral, "Suffren," was directed to commence run 2, and given the following directions: "Battery No. 1 out of action, battery No. 4 was not manned, concentrate your fire on 3, 4, and 6, especially 4."

Run 2 was carried out most deliberately, "Suffren" being about 3,000 yards ahead of "Charlemagne"—both ships made excellent practice—the only round fired at them was from fort No. 6.

The run was completed at 3 p.m.

Covering ships fired very few rounds during this run; it was evident that forts were silenced.

3.5. Mine sweepers were ordered to close the entrance, and carry out sweeping operations laid down.

"Albion" and "Triumph" were ordered to prepare to close forts to 2,000 yards of southern and northern shore respectively, keeping way on and carrying out destruction of guns still intact.

Rear-Admiral in "Vengeance" being directed to follow them to direct operations.

While "Albion" and "Triumph" were attempting to destroy the guns of forts 1 and 6 at close range, fort No. 4 apparently fired one round from her northernmost gun. The fort was immediately engaged by "Albion" and "Irresistible." Forts 1 and 6 also appeared to fire one round each. These were the last rounds fired at the ships.

Concealed guns of apparently 6" calibre fired from positions 1 mile north-east of Cape Takeh, and from behind northern end of Yeni Shehr village. These guns did no damage, though "Gaulois" was struck three times on the armour.

"Albion," when off Kum Kale, reported two explosions, probably light ground mines; these occurred about 100 yards ahead of the ship, and did no damage.

By 4 p.m. the forts were reduced, and the mine sweepers were ordered to enter and commence sweeping. "Vengeance," "Albion," and "Triumph," with six destroyers, covered these operations.

The remainder of the fleet returning to Tenedos during the night of the 25th/26th, mine sweepers swept the entrance; they found no mines. The enemy were reported as burning the villages at entrance.

February 26.

"Albion," "Triumph," and "Majestic" entered straits between 8 a.m. and 9 a.m., and shelled forts 3 and 6 from inside entrance, also firing station below De Totts' battery.

"Albion," preceded by sweepers, proceeded to a position 12,000 yards from fort 8, from which position fire was opened on that fort. "Majestic" supported "Albion," these two ships being under fire from field guns and howitzers from Asiatic shore, ships remained under weigh; enemy scored one hit on "Majestic."

"Jed" and "Chelmer" reconnoitred northern and southern shores during forenoon as far up as the line White Cliffs—Suandere, both ships being engaged with the enemy's light batteries; they sunk some large range buoys, and located several batteries.

"Vengeance," from outside straits, was engaged bombarding position on Asiatic shore near Achilles Tomb.

At 2.30 p.m., the enemy apparently having abandoned Kum Kale and Seddul Bahr, the opportunity was seized to land demolition

parties on both sides—from "Vengeance" at Kum Kale, and "Irresistible" at Seddul Bahr. Parties being covered by the guns of "Vengeance," "Irresistible," "Cornwallis," "Dublin," and "Racoon," forts 3, 4, and 6 were entered and demolitions carried out, and two new 4" guns concealed near Achilles Tomb were destroyed, but owing to lateness of the landing it was impossible to verify results. Both parties encountered slight opposition, the enemy being in some force in Seddul Bahr prevented fort 1 being reached.

On night of the 26th/27th mine sweepers entered straits to continue sweeping in lower area, being covered by "Colne," "Jed," and "Kennet," who engaged enemy's batteries and sunk more range buoys.

Seaplanes carried out reconnaissances inside Straits in order to locate batteries, &c. Amongst other details they reported battery 8 now contains eight guns. Many positions for guns have been prepared on both shores.

February 27.

Weather broke, north-easterly gale, much rain with low visibility. Operations inside the Straits much impeded, small progress made.

February 28.

Heavy north-easterly gale. Operations confined to watching the Straits.

March 1.

Gale having moderated, operations inside Straits were resumed.

The following battleships entered Straits to engage howitzers and field batteries:—"Vengeance," "Ocean," "Albion," "Triumph," "Irresistible," and "Majestic."

Fort 8 and battery at White Cliffs were engaged by "Albion" and "Triumph," "Ocean" and "Majestic" meanwhile engaging guns near Aren Kioi village and on European shore. These proved extremely hard to locate, and when seen great difficulty was experienced in obtaining points of aim, the guns being well concealed.

The action was discontinued at 5 p.m. "Ocean," "Albion," and "Triumph" were each hit on several occasions by projectiles of 6-inch calibre and below without suffering any serious damage.

Demolition party from "Irresistible" landed at Seddul Bahr and completed demolition of fort 6.

The party was attacked during the operation. The fire from covering ships and destroyers in Morto Bay, however, was sufficient to disperse enemy.

During the night of 1st-2nd March mine-sweepers entered and swept to within 3,000 yards of Kephez Point. They were covered by destroyers. When abreast of Suandere River batteries opened fire and sweepers retired, destroyers covering withdrawal.

No vessels were hit.

March 2.

"Canopus," "Swiftsure," and "Cornwallis" entered the Straits and engaged forts Nos. 8 and 7, also field guns.

Garrison of fort No. 8 were forced to withdraw, but material damage to fort could not be determined.

Howitzers and concealed field guns opened a heavy fire, which could not be silenced. All ships were hit on several occasions, suffering some material damage.

An observation mine exploded ineffectively ahead of "Canopus."

On the 1st-2nd March the French squadron reconnoitred the Gulf of Xeros, bombarding the forts and earthworks of the Bulair lines and the bridge over Kavak. French mine-sweepers swept along the coast. They discovered no mines.

The landing-places in the Gulf of Xeros were also reported on.

Destroyers and mine-sweepers continued the attack on the Kephez minefield, but made no progress in the face of heavy fire.

March 3.

Weather in the morning unfavourable—foggy.

In the afternoon "Albion," "Prince George," "Triumph" continued the attack on forts 7 and 8 and field batteries. These latter were not so active as on former days.

Sweeping operations continued at night, covered by destroyers. Slight progress was made.

Seaplanes carried out useful reconnaissance, without, however, being able to locate batteries firing at the ships.

March 4.

It being uncertain whether forts Nos. 1 and 4 were absolutely destroyed, demolition parties were ordered to land and complete the destruction, being covered by a landing party of the Royal Marine Brigade, one company of 250 men each side.

This landing had been postponed for several days, on account of the weather.

Seaplanes reconnoitred the vicinity of forts and villages near them in the morning, and reported no movement of troops.

At 10 a.m. parties landed at Seddul Bahr and Kum Kale.

Both parties met with opposition. At Seddul Bahr no progress could be made, and the party withdrew at 3 p.m.

At Kum Kale an attempt was made to reach fort No. 4, but without success, the enemy being in some force in well-concealed trenches. Great difficulty was experienced in withdrawing the advanced party, the enemy gaining possession of a cemetery near Mendere Bridge, commanding the ground over which the party had to fall back, and which could not be shelled by the ships, as our troops were between the cemetery and the ships.

Seaplanes attempted to locate the enemy's trenches without success, descending to 2,000 feet in their efforts to distinguish the positions: one seaplane was hit twenty-eight times and another eight times.

It was not till the destroyers were sent close in to shell the trenches that the retirement could be carried out.

After sunset "Scorpion" and "Wolverine" ran in and landed parties, under fire, to search the beach from Kum Kale to the cliffs below fort No. 4. The former brought off two officers and five men, who had been unable to reach the boats.

March 5.

The attack on the forts at the Narrows commenced by indirect bombardment by "Queen Elizabeth."

Three seaplanes were sent up to spot for fall of shot. One met with an accident, and the second was forced to return on account of her pilot being wounded by a rifle bullet; in con-

sequence, they were not of assistance in the firing

"Queen Elizabeth" was under fire from field guns, being struck on many occasions, without, however, suffering any great material damage.

March 6.

Indirect attack by "Queen Elizabeth" continued.

"Vengeance," inside the Straits, spotted for "Queen Elizabeth," "Albion," "Majestic," "Prince George," and "Suffren" engaged forts No. 7, 8, and 13, with what result could not be discovered.

At night "Amethyst," with destroyers and mine-sweepers in company, proceeded inside Dardanelles to attack the Kephez minefield. Some progress was made, but, as on former occasions, gunfire drove the mine-sweepers out of the mined area.

Between the 3rd and 6th March "Sapphire" was engaged in the neighbourhood of Mitylene in destroying telegraph stations, &c.

March 7.

French squadron consisting of "Suffren," "Gaulois," "Charlemagne," and "Bouvet" entered the Straits and engaged forts Nos. 7 and 8.

Later "Agamemnon" and "Lord Nelson" attacked the forts at the Narrows by direct fire from ranges between 14,000 and 12,000 yards. After a severe engagement, during which both ships were hit by heavy projectiles, forts Nos. 13 and 19 were silenced. During this attack the French battleships kept down the fire from howitzers and field guns.

"Dublin" at Bulair was engaged with a shore battery.

During the night of the 7th-8th March destroyers attacked the searchlights at Kephez, but without result, the lights being extinguished temporarily, but invariably re-appearing.

March 8.

"Queen Elizabeth" entered the Straits to continue the attack on the Narrows by direct fire. Conditions became unfavourable for spotting, and little was accomplished.

Weather was too misty for seaplanes to do any spotting.

Attack on minefield was continued at night with mine-sweepers and picket boats. Batteries opened fire.

March 9.

"Albion," "Prince George," and "Irresistible" entered the Straits and made a thorough search for boats, &c., and shelled look-out stations. The weather was misty throughout the day.

At night picket boats covered by destroyers attacked the Kephez minefield with explosive creeps.

March 10.

"Irresistible," "Dublin," and "Ark Royal" off Bulair. The former bombarded the enemy's positions when guns had been located. The seaplanes were unable to fly owing to the rough weather.

"Ocean" and "Albion" bombarded light gun battery in Morte Bay, also villages and positions near entrance.

After nightfall seven sweepers, attended by picket boats fitted with explosive creeps, supported by destroyers, "Amethyst" and "Canopus," entered the Straits. The latter opened fire on the batteries and searchlights protecting the minefield off Kephez Point, but was unable to extinguish the lights. The vessels were subjected to a heavy fire from guns of and below 6-inch calibre.

Sweepers and picket boats succeeded in getting above the minefield with the object of sweeping down with the current. Picket boats destroyed several cables, but only one pair of sweepers got out their sweep and little was effected. Two trawlers were hit by 6-inch projectiles.

Trawler No. 339 was sunk by a mine.

March 11.

Seaplanes carried out reconnaissance for the ships operating off Bulair.

Ships inside the Straits engaged in watching both shores.

Operations against the Narrows delayed by failure to clear the minefield.

Attack on the minefield at night failed owing to the sweepers refusing to face the heavy fire opened by batteries on them and the covering destroyers.

March 12.

Daylight operations at a standstill. Weather misty.

French mine sweepers attacked the minefield at night with no success, being driven off by heavy fire.

Aerial reconnaissance reported a line of mines near the surface extending from Suan-dere Bay in an E.S.E. direction. These were examined by a sweeper and picket boats which attacked the line with creeps and explosive sweeps. The line subsequently turned out to be an obstruction consisting of empty observation mines moored by chain cables and connected by a wire hawser. The latter apparently had a hemp netting suspended from it. It was evidently an anti-submarine obstruction.

March 13.

A determined attack on the minefield was made on the night of the 13th March, volunteer officers and men being in each trawler.

The plan of attack was similar to that on the 10th, it being very essential for the sweepers to get above the minefield before getting out their sweeps as they can make no progress against the current.

"Amethyst" and destroyers covered the operations, which commenced with a bombardment of the lights and batteries by "Cornwallis."

The defence of the minefield was well organised, and sweepers and picket boats had to pass through an area lit by six powerful searchlights, under fire from fort No. 13 and batteries Nos. 7 and 8, besides numerous light guns estimated at twenty to thirty on either shore.

The passage was accomplished, but on reaching the turning point only one pair of trawlers was able to get out the sweep owing to damage to winches and gear, and loss of personnel.

Picket boats did excellent service in blowing up cables with explosive creeps.

"Amethyst" drew the fire of the batteries at a critical period, and suffered severely.

March 14, 15 and 16.

Mine sweepers engaged in clearing up area inside the Straits in which ships would have to manoeuvre in their combined attacks against the forts at the Narrows and the minefields at Kephez.

LETTER FROM VICE-ADMIRAL DE ROBECK, MARCH 26, 1915.

Sir, "*Queen Elizabeth*," March 26, 1915.

I have the honour to enclose a detailed narrative of the operations in the Dardanelles on the 18th March, 1915.

With regard to the general results of this attack, although the principal forts remained silent for considerable intervals, only a portion of their armaments can be considered disabled. The tactics employed by the enemy when the bombardment by the fleet becomes heavy are to desert their guns and retire to bomb-proof shelters. When they consider a favourable opportunity offers they re-man the guns and open fire again.

But taking into consideration the accuracy of fire of the ships and the number of explosions which occurred in the forts, both matériel and personnel must have suffered considerably. Throughout the greater part of the day the fleet appeared to have a marked advantage as regards gunfire, so much so that the mine sweepers were called in at 2 P.M. Soon after they were inside it was, however, evident from the amount of fire from howitzers and field guns that they would not be able to proceed into the minefield at Kephez Point, and beyond sweeping in the area where "*Bouvet*" sank the sweepers effected nothing.

Up to the time "*Bouvet*" was mined everything had proceeded satisfactorily, the ships receiving little damage by the enemy's gunfire, although the annoyance from concealed batteries on both sides of the Straits was very great. It was evident that some of these batteries were directing their fire on the control positions of the ships. In this way the "*Inflexible*" lost two very fine officers who were in her fore control, viz., Commander Rudolf H. C. Verner and Lieutenant Arthur W. Blaker.

During the period the second division battleships "*Ocean*," "*Irresistible*," "*Albion*," and "*Vengeance*" were bombarding the situation again looked satisfactory.

"*Inflexible*" reported shortly after 4 P.M. that she had struck a mine, and she was ordered out of the Dardanelles. I submit that it reflects great credit on Captain Phillimore and his ship's company that "*Inflexible*" was able to reach shoal water off Tenedos.

It was only after "*Wear*" had returned from "*Irresistible*" at 4.50 P.M. that it was realised that the latter had also struck a mine. As soon as I was informed of this I ordered "*Ocean*" to take her in tow. This was, however, impossible, as will be seen from the reports of "*Ocean*" and "*Irresistible*." It was also apparent that the area

in which the ships were operating was too dangerous, and I therefore determined to withdraw the "*B*" (advance) line and break off the engagement. Whilst these orders were being carried out "*Ocean*" was also struck by a torpedo or mine.

Eventually the ships withdrew at dark, the destroyers having taken off the ships' companies of both "*Ocean*" and "*Irresistible*."

The conduct of all ranks was reported to be excellent and up to the best traditions of our Service. The saving of valuable lives by

WEAR,
COLNE,
CHELMER,
JED, and
KENNET,

was a brilliant and gallant performance on their part.

I would submit the names of—

Captain Christopher P. Metcalfe, H.M.S. "*Wear*,"

Commander Claude Seymour, H.M.S. "*Colne*,"

Lieutenant Commander Hugh T. England, H.M.S. "*Chelmer*,"

Lieutenant Commander George F. A. Mulock, H.M.S. "*Jed*," and

Lieutenant Charles E. S. Farrant, H.M.S. "*Kennet*,"

for their Lordships' favourable consideration; and if I single out one for specially meritorious service, it is Captain Christopher P. Metcalfe, H.M.S. "*Wear*," of whose conduct I cannot speak too highly.

I would also bring to their Lordships' notice the excellent conduct of the officers in charge of picket boats.

These young officers, who were under fire all day, performed most valuable service.

I received every assistance from my staff.

The advice and initiative of my Chief of Staff, Commodore Roger J. B. Keyes, was of the greatest value. He left in "*Wear*," shortly before 5.30 P.M., to see whether it was possible to save "*Ocean*" or "*Irresistible*," but their condition made it impracticable.

Though the squadron had to retire without accomplishing its task, it was by no means a defeated force, and the withdrawal was only necessitated owing to the mine menace, all ranks being anxious to renew the attack.

As a result of this bombardment it is considered imperative for success that the area in which ships are manoeuvring shall be kept clear of mines, also that the mine sweepers be manned by naval ratings, who will be prepared to work under heavy fire. In some cases their crews appear to have no objection to being blown up by mines, though they do not seem to like to work under gun-fire, which is a new element in their calling.

A reorganisation of the mine sweepers' personnel is completed, and they are now manned for the most part by naval ranks and ratings.

I have, &c.

J. M. DE ROBECK,

Vice-Admiral,

The Secretary of the Admiralty,

Enclosure.

REPORT OF OPERATIONS CARRIED OUT BY THE ALLIED BRITISH AND FRENCH FLEETS OFF THE DARDANELLES ON MARCH 17 AND 18, 1915.

(All times are local, *i.e.*, two hours fast on G.M.T.)

The attempts to clear the minefield at Kephez Point during the dark hours having failed, it became necessary to carry this out by daylight.

The plan of operations was fully explained to captains of ships on the 16th, and issued to them on the 17th March.

Sweeping operations against Kephez minefield were suspended during the nights of the 15th-16th, 16th-17th, and 17th-18th, trawlers during this time being employed in thoroughly sweeping the area in which the ships would have to manoeuvre.

It was considered impracticable for ships to be at anchor inside the Dardanelles, owing to the heavy howitzer fire which can be brought to bear on them; subject to the necessity of occasionally moving, so as to throw off the enemy's fire, ships remained stationary on the 18th, in order that the gun-fire of the fleet might be as accurate as possible.

The morning of the 18th was fine, though it was at first doubtful whether the direction of the wind—which was from the south—would allow the operations to take place under favourable conditions for spotting; there was also a slight haze over the land; this, however, cleared, and the wind having fallen the signal was made at 8.26 a.m. that operation would be proceeded with, commencing at 10.30 a.m.

March 18.

At 8.15 a.m. the Commander of the British mine sweepers reported area between 8,000 and 10,000 yards range was traversed by sweepers on the night of the 17th-18th without result.

8.45.—Senior Officer of mine sweepers reported that they had swept as far as White Cliffs, "eleven cutters showed signs of working—no mines have been caught in the sweep."

8.50.—Signal was made to French Admiral that Vice-Admiral did not wish him to approach nearer than 500 yards to the position of the reported mines situated at S.E. of Suandere Bay.

9.7.—It was reported that "Mosquito" had sunk three electric mines, none of which exploded; these were evidently empty mine-cases which were used to form a boom defence below Suandere Bay, and which had been broken up by our explosive creeps.

9.10.—Destroyers, fitted with light sweep, were ordered to sweep in ahead of the fleet.

10.30.—Ships reported—"Ready for action"—and Line "A" proceeded in the following order:—

PRINCE GEORGE (on port beam).
AGAMEMNON.
LORD NELSON.
QUEEN ELIZABETH.
INFLEXIBLE.
TRIUMPH (on starboard beam).

Destroyers with sweeps preceded Line "A" into the Dardanelles. Each battleship had one picket-boat in attendance on her to deal with floating mines, and "Wear" was also in attendance on "Queen Elizabeth."

"Dartmouth" was ordered to patrol the

north coast of Gallipoli to fire on any batteries she could locate, and which were firing on the fleet inside the Straits.

"Dublin" demonstrated against Bashika Bay and watched Yeni Shehr.

11.—Ships were engaging field-guns and howitzers firing from the Asiatic shore.

11.15.—Four steamers were observed in the middle of the stream off Chanak; these made off up the Straits about fifteen minutes later.

11.25.—"Queen Elizabeth" opened fire on fort No. 19; "Agamemnon," "Lord Nelson," and "Inflexible" opening fire shortly afterwards in the order named. All line "A" were firing by 11.36 a.m.

11.40.—"Triumph" was firing at fort No. 8 at a range of 10,400 yards.

Line "A" was now being subjected to a heavy fire from howitzers and field-guns. One battery of the former, using four guns of about 6-inch calibre, which fell well together, was particularly annoying. The forts also opened fire, but the range, about 14,400 yards, was evidently too great for them, and they fired only a few shots, none of which took effect.

11.50.—A big explosion was seen in fort No. 20, on which "Queen Elizabeth" was now firing. "Agamemnon" and "Lord Nelson" were apparently making good practice against forts Nos. 13 and 17.

About this time the fire from the heavy howitzers was less intense, but there were still a large number of smaller guns firing on ships of line "A," all of whom were struck several times at this period.

0.6 p.m.—"Suffren," "Bouvet," "Gaulois," "Charlemagne" (who formed the first line "B"), were ordered to pass through line "A" and engage the forts at closer range.

The wind at this time was blowing almost straight from the ships to Chanak, making spotting difficult from aloft.

"Suffren" led the French Squadron through line "A" well ahead of "Bouvet," and by 0.32 p.m. she came under fire from, and engaged, the forts. Fort No. 13 was firing four guns, and forts Nos. 19, 7A, 9, and 8 all opened fire, and possibly 16 as well.

The action now became general, both lines "A" and "B" engaging the forts, and, at the same time, the lighter batteries.

Fort No. 7A was very persistent, and seemed hard to hit.

0.47.—"Agamemnon" was being made the target for most of the lighter guns. She turned 32 points, and the batteries lost the range.

"Inflexible" was also under heavy fire, and a picket boat alongside her was sunk.

0.52.—Some large projectiles were falling into the water about 500 yards short of the line "B."

Forts Nos. 13, 19, 7A, and 8 were all firing: their practice was good, chiefly directed against line "B," "Prince George," and "Triumph."

0.56.—"Inflexible's" fore bridge observed to be on fire, blazing fiercely.

About this time a heavy explosion occurred in fort No. 13.

1.15.—Line "B" under a heavy fire, "Suffren" apparently hit several times, Fort No. 8 had now ceased firing.

1.25.—There was a slight lull in the firing, "Lord Nelson," however, being straddled by a 6-inch battery,

"Gaulois" and "Charlemagne" were making good practice on forts Nos. 13 and 16.

1.25.—"Inflexible" quitted line to extinguish fire and clear control top, which had been wrecked by a shell, and all personnel therein disabled.

1.38.—Seaplane reported Fort No. 16 firing; 19 hit; 17 hit but firing; new battery at Kephez Point not manned; battery south of Saundere River firing.

1.43.—There was little firing; mine sweepers were ordered to close. The French Squadron were ordered out of the Straits, also "Prince George" and "Triumph," the ships relieving them being formed up just inside the Straits.

1.54.—"Suffren" leading line "B" out of Straits, with "Bouvet" immediately astern. A large explosion occurred on the starboard side of the latter, abaft the after-bridge, accompanied by dense masses of reddish-black smoke. "Bouvet" capsized to starboard and sank within two minutes of the first explosion.

From the "Queen Elizabeth" it appeared that the explosion was not due to a mine, but possibly to a large projectile; it was also considered that a magazine explosion had occurred, as she was previously observed to be on fire aft, and she sank so rapidly; there appears little doubt that her magazine blew up, but whether it was exploded by a mine, gunfire, or by an internal fire, is not clear.

British boats were quickly on the scene, but the whole episode occupied so short a time that few of the crew could have reached the upper deck; only sixty-six were picked up.

"Suffren" stood by till all the survivors were picked up, the remainder of her line proceeding out of harbour.

The enemy fired a few shells at the boats picking up survivors, without, however, obtaining any hits.

2.15.—"Queen Elizabeth" and "Lord Nelson" were practically the only ships firing, the forts being silent. About this time the enemy again opened fire with their 6-inch howitzer battery.

2.31.—Seaplane over forts at 1 p.m. reported troops at Kephez Point. Forts Nos. 13, 16, 17, and 19 all manned and firing; Saunders also firing.

2.32.—New line "B" passed through line "A" to engage forts at closer range. This line consisted of "Vengeance," "Irresistible," "Albion," and "Ocean," with "Swiftsure" and "Majestic" in support.

2.52.—Line "B" was engaged with forts, of which only No. 19 was firing at all rapidly.

3.7.—Large explosion behind Fort No. 13; from the volume of smoke it appeared that an oil tank had been set on fire.

3.14.—A heavy explosion was observed alongside "Irresistible," evidently a big shell.

All forts were now firing rapidly, but inaccurately.

Fort No. 19 apparently concentrating on "Irresistible," "Queen Elizabeth" in consequence opened salvo firing on it.

3.32.—"Irresistible" was observed to have slight list.

4.11.—"Inflexible" reported "struck a mine"; she proceeded out of the Straits.

4.14.—"Irresistible" apparently unable to move, and with a noticeable list. "Wear" was ordered to close her and ascer-

tain what was the matter, signalling communication having broken down

"Irresistible" was ordered to proceed out of the Straits, if able to do so, and "Ocean" to prepare to take "Irresistible" in tow.

"Wear" was seen to go alongside "Irresistible," and subsequently returned to "Queen Elizabeth" at 4.50 p.m. with 28 officers and 582 crew of "Irresistible" on board her. It was then ascertained for the first time that "Irresistible" had struck a mine, both engine rooms being immediately flooded.

As the ship was helpless, her commanding officer decided to remove a portion of the crew, retaining the executive officer and 10 volunteers to work wires, &c., should it be found possible to take her in tow.

The operation of removing the crew was carried out in a perfectly orderly manner, the ship being under fire the whole time from forts Nos. 7 and 8 and batteries near Aren Kioi.

4.50.—When it was learnt that "Irresistible" had also struck a mine, orders were given for line "B" to withdraw.

5.10.—"Wear" having disembarked crew of "Irresistible," was ordered to close "Ocean" and "Irresistible" and direct the former to withdraw if she was unable to take the latter in tow.

5.50.—Survivors on board "Irresistible" were removed to "Ocean," the captains of both ships being of opinion that it was impracticable to take "Irresistible" in tow, she being bows on to the Asiatic shore, listing badly, at right angles to the course for going out, and there appearing to be insufficient room to manoeuvre between her and the shore.

It was therefore determined to leave her till dark, when an attempt would be made to tow her out with destroyers and mine sweepers, arrangements being meanwhile taken to torpedo and sink her in deep water should there be any chance of her grounding; this was always a possibility, as she was in the dead water off White Cliffs with a light breeze blowing up the Straits.

"Irresistible" having been abandoned, it was decided, in view of the unexpected mine menace, to abandon the mine-sweeping of the Kephez minefield, it being inadvisable to leave heavy ships inside the Straits to cover the mine-sweepers.

6.5.—"Ocean," while withdrawing, struck a mine and took a quick list to starboard of about 15 degrees.

At the same time a shell, striking the starboard side aft, jammed the helm nearly hard a-port.

The list becoming gradually greater, her commanding officer determined to disembark the crew; this was done in the destroyers "Colne," "Jed," and "Chelmer," under a heavy cross fire from forts Nos. 7 and 8 and batteries at Aren Kioi. "Chelmer" was twice struck while alongside "Ocean."

"Destroyers "Wear," "Raccoon," "Mosquito," and "Kennet" also stood by "Ocean."

When all were reported clear of the ship, the captain embarked in "Jed" and lay off till dark; he then returned to her to make absolutely certain no one was left on board and that nothing could be done to save her.

His opinion being that nothing could be done, the ship was finally abandoned in the centre of the Straits at about 7.30 p.m.

The captains of "Ocean" and "Irresistible," after reporting to the Vice-Admiral Commanding, returned to the Dardanelles to join the destroyers, which, with six mine sweepers, had been ordered to enter the Straits after dark to endeavour to tow "Irresistible" into the current and prevent "Ocean" drifting out of it. No trace of either ship could be found; this was confirmed by "Jed" at 11 p.m. after an exhaustive search. "Canopus" at daylight also reconnoitred, and found no trace of either. There is no doubt both ships sank in deep water.

The squadron anchored at Tenedos for the night, "Canopus" and "Cornwallis" being on patrol with destroyers at the entrance of the Straits.

The damaged ships were dealt with as follows:—

"Inflexible" anchored north of Tenedos.

"Gaulois" grounded on north of Drepano Island—damage due to gunfire.

On the morning of the 19th instant, Contre Amiral Guépratte informed me that the "Suffren" was leaking forward; it had been necessary to flood the fore magazine on account of fire, and a heavy shell had started a leak.

"Inflexible," "Suffren," and "Gaulois" will therefore require to go to Malta for repairs.

J. M. DE ROBECK,

Vice-Admiral.

March 24, 1915.

DESTROYER OPERATIONS, MARCH 17 AND 18, 1915.

(All times are local.)

"Basilisk," "Grasshopper," "Raccoon" and "Mosquito" covered the operations of the mine sweepers on the night of the 17th-18th March, being engaged during this service with shore batteries on both sides of the Straits.

At 6 a.m. on the 18th March, "Mosquito" saw and sunk three carbonite mines floating near Merto Bay—none exploded.

10 a.m.—"Colne" and "Chelmer" sweeping ahead of line "A." During this time "Colne's" whaler was struck by a 4-inch shell.

"Wear" was in attendance on "Queen Elizabeth" throughout the day, being in consequence frequently under fire. When "Bouvet" sank, "Wear" closed and lowered whaler to pick up survivors, being under fire at the time. "Basilisk," "Grasshopper," "Raccoon," "Mosquito," "Ribble," "Kennet," "Colne," and "Chelmer" also closed, but were too late to pick up any survivors.

2.45 p.m.—Destroyers closed "Gaulois," who was in distress outside the Straits, "Colne," "Chelmer," "Mosquito," and "Kennet" transferring some of her crew to "Suffren," "Dartmouth" and "Lord Nelson."

4.10. — When "Irresistible" was observed to be in distress, "Wear" was ordered to close her. "Wear" went alongside and took off practically the whole crew under heavy fire, transferring them at 4.50 p.m. to "Queen Elizabeth."

She then returned and, after sounding round the "Irresistible," remained in the vicinity of the damaged ships until nightfall, when she rejoined "Queen Elizabeth" to report.

"Colne," "Chelmer," "Raccoon," "Mosquito," "Kennet," and "Jed" stood by "Irresistible," having come in from entrance of Straits.

6.5. — When "Ocean" struck a mine, "Raccoon," "Mosquito," "Colne," "Chelmer," "Jed," "Kennet," and "Wear" stood by under heavy cross fire, "Colne," "Chelmer," "Jed," and "Kennet" going alongside to remove the crew.

7.15. — "Colne" found no signs of "Ocean"; enemy still firing on "Irresistible."

8.30 to 11.30 p.m.—"Jed" carried out a thorough search, but could find no trace of "Ocean" or "Irresistible."

Damage sustained by destroyers:—

"Chelmer," while alongside "Ocean," struck and holed by centre stokehold, which was flooded. She went alongside "Lord Nelson," where her own mat and that belonging to "Lord Nelson" were placed over the hole. She shortly afterwards proceeded to Tenedos, escorted by "Colne."

"Raccoon," while standing by "Irresistible," was damaged by concussion of large shell under starboard quarter and some shrapnel bullets.

J. M. DE ROBECK, *Vice-Admiral.*

March 24, 1915.

MINE SWEEPING OPERATIONS, MARCH 17 AND 18, 1915.

Night of March 17 and 18.

British and French mine sweepers continued sweeping area below the line Suandere River-Kephez Light.

They reported: "No mines found."

March 18.

Mine sweepers ordered to enter and commence sweeping at 2 p.m. Of these two pairs got sweeps out, when abreast of White Cliffs, about 3.30 p.m.; they were under fire.

No progress was made beyond this point, as it was not considered advisable to leave heavy ships inside the Straits to cover their operations, "Inflexible" having already struck a mine.

J. M. DE ROBECK, *Vice-Admiral.*

March 24, 1915.

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